

excluded, disinfected, or admitted according to the discretion of the local health officer. A great deal of unwarranted hostile criticism has been indulged in with reference to rag-disinfection in the port of New York. At a time when an epidemic of cholera was imminent, the health officer of that port consulted with the health officials of the neighboring cities, and of the state, and the action which he took in reference to the disinfection of rags was based upon that conference, and has received the endorsement of the sanitary authorities of the country. While New York has from the very first been vigilant, other cities have been careless and negligent; and that contagious disease has not been introduced by means of infected rags, is due to good luck rather than to good management. That there should be some federal control of such matters goes without saying, for, while state rights are to be respected, there is such a thing as carrying that principle too far. The right to permit contagion to enter and ravage the country, because a quarantine would be expensive, is not a right which any state can claim as guaranteed it by the constitution. If the general government can restrict the sale of oleomargarine, it can certainly be no great stretch of its powers to adopt such general measures as will apply to all its ports of entry, by which commerce and the public health are at the same time protected.

DR. HARRINGTON, OF BOSTON, has recently had under his care four patients suffering from chromium poisoning. The first case was that of a cap-maker, who, after handling and cutting a large quantity of dark-blue cloth for the manufacture of military caps, began to suffer from an intolerable itching of the hands, face, neck, and scalp, which was followed by ulceration, causing running sores. The symptoms disappeared after she ceased work upon this cloth, and returned when she renewed her work upon it. The second case was that of a clergyman, who was similarly affected after wearing a pair of brown woollen gloves. The other cases were young children, who had, previous to the appearance of the first symptoms, put on for the first time new suits of brown woollen clothes. An analysis of the goods in all the four instances revealed chromium. The chromium mordants are now being extensively employed in dyeing, much more so than formerly, and the range of colors produced by their aid is very great, including brown, brownish red, claret

red, olive, yellow, old gold, purple, blue, black, buff, and gray. Dr. Harrington, at the conclusion of his paper describing these cases, read before the Massachusetts medical society, says that it is yet to be determined whether in these cases the compounds formed by the mordant and the dye-stuffs are in themselves the active poison, or are decomposed by the secretions of the body, with liberation of simple chrome compounds.

THE BUFFALO MEETING.

THE least that can be said of the meeting of the American association for the advancement of science which has just closed, is that it was thoroughly enjoyable. The arrangements made by the local committee for the entertainment of the association were admirably adapted to promote the objects of the meeting. The simple habits of the members led them to welcome rather than to regret the absence of official festivities on a large scale, but prepared them to enjoy the hospitalities tendered by leading citizens and organizations, which were noteworthy both for their ample scale and their unostentatious simplicity. On the excursions to Grand Island and to Niagara, every opportunity for pleasure and profit was afforded without in any way troubling the members by detailed programmes or burdensome attentions.

The smallness of the meeting was its only disappointing feature. The beautiful summer climate of Buffalo, its central position between the east and the west, and the prospect of a visit to one of the grandest and most interesting of natural phenomena, just freed from the onerous exactions which such a visit used to entail, would, it was expected, attract one of the largest assemblages of members that had yet been witnessed. Yet, not one-fourth of the membership was found at the meeting. The paucity of southern members was especially noteworthy. One great purpose of the organization is to bring into contact the intellectual element of the north and the south as well as of the east and the west, and the association can render no more worthy service than that of promoting education as well as research in every quarter of our land. It is much to be desired that workers and educators in the south should point out to their colleagues in the north how that stimulus of personal contact, sympathy, and attention, so necessary to the fulness of intellectual development, can best be secured to their section.

The scientific outcome of the meeting is, on the

whole, encouraging. The writers of popular essays were out in rather less force than usual. We did not notice on the programme the title of a single paper attacking the theory of gravitation. Communications of doubtful value appeared in about the usual proportion. Statements of careful observations, and well-matured results appeared in larger proportion than usual, yet, there was no announcement of a brilliant discovery, or of a research of extraordinary importance. All that can certainly be noticed is a well-marked tendency to improvement. Notwithstanding this improvement, the question is still open whether the association can reach the highest standard of usefulness by aiming to be primarily a medium for the communication and publication of scientific papers.

That the system in vogue at present is not satisfactory in all points must be conceded by all. A member visits the place of meeting in the morning, and receives a programme for the day, showing what papers are to be read before each section. He finds two or three that he wants to hear, and two or three more that he would like to know something about in order to decide whether he does or does not want to hear them. But the only way to learn anything about one class or the other is to wait patiently till they are called in their turn. There are perhaps two or three papers to precede any in which he is interested. He waits for one, because the author has estimated its length at only ten minutes. But the author occupies twenty minutes with details so prolix and tedious that his hearers are weary when he gets through. Then the presiding officer calls for remarks. No one is ready to proffer any remark, and the next paper is about to be called when some one, out of pure charity, drops a remark. Another replies, and very soon a desultory debate is in progress having little relation to the subject of the paper. Our hearer estimates that an hour will be required to reach the paper he wants to hear, and leaves the room. In order to be sure he returns in half an hour, to find that the authors of the intermediate papers were absent, and that, in consequence, the paper he wanted to hear has already been read. He has thus spent an hour without any profitable result whatever.

The system which leads to such results calls loudly for improvement. Specified hours should be assigned for hearing and discussing specified papers. Debate upon subjects of interest suggested by any communication should be allowed

for in advance. Less formality in the presentation of papers should be observed. There is no necessity of entering into the long details with which members so often weary their hearers, who would be satisfied to hear the pith of a communication. It will also be well for members to consider whether the conception of the association as a body organized solely for the reception and publication of original researches might not well be modified. Scientific societies meeting at short intervals are now so numerous that a body which assembles only once a year is at a great disadvantage as a medium of publication.

On the other hand, the social feature of the meetings should be more clearly recognized. No class of men are so much in need of contact with their fellow-workers as those who are exploring the fields of science, and in no other enlightened country is this contact so difficult as in ours. As matters now stand, we believe that the association can do more good by bringing men together to talk over the work of the year, and the prospects of the future, than by remaining a medium for receiving original communications. To do this effectively requires a common understanding among the older members, in virtue of which more of them will be in attendance. This again requires extensive, though not very radical changes in the method of procedure adopted by the standing committee, the several sections, and the association at large. The system which we think should be aimed at is one in which the exposition, by leading members, of their work during the year, whether published or unpublished, shall be a prominent and well understood feature. In a word, everything that can be done to make the meetings attractive and profitable will add in an increasing ratio to the success of the organization. And the most urgent requirement is a plan by which every member shall be able to hear what he wants to without being required to listen to anything he does not want to hear. Such a plan will react upon the members by supplying an incentive to the preparation of communications by those members who might say something of special interest to their fellows, but who are now deterred from so doing by the absence of the proper arrangements for being heard.

Withal, there is the constant necessity of such familiarity on the part of those who are to read papers with what they have to say, and how they intend to present it, that they may not bore their audiences with trifling details.